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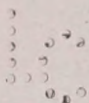
THE FAIR PRIZE

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A WORLD'S FAIR STORY

By HARRY ESKEW pseud.

Horace Stewart Quillin
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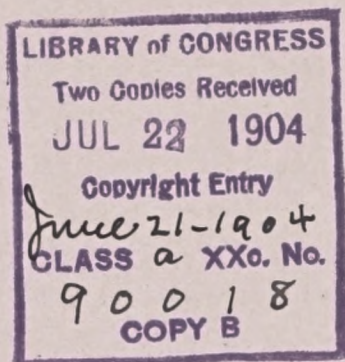


H. B. WIGGIN'S SONS CO.,
BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

1904.

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CHAPTER I.



IN THE balcony, just outside the beautiful palm room of the St. Charles Hotel, New Orleans, sits Mr. James Dalsimer, of Dalsimer & Pelletier, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans. (The elder Pelletier died five years ago, perhaps you remember, and in the reorganization, Dalsimer, who had risen by pure brain hustle from office boy to special representative and junior partner, was made head of the firm.) Dalsimer is rather stout, a little bald, a little grey, and on the shady side of fifty. He is smoking a fragrant Havana, taking an occasional sip of a cool mixture, and watching with worshipful eyes two fluffily-gowned figures approaching him from the far end of the balcony after having made a circuit of the palm room.

The orchestra in the café is playing selections from the almost forgotten "Mikado." One of the approaching figures is swaying to the rythm of :

"If that is so, sing derry down derry,
'Tis evident, very, our tastes are one ;
Away we'll go and merrily marry,
Nor tardily tarry till day is done."

The other clasps the swaying one, with an obvious purpose of restraint. Suddenly the girl breaks away from her mother's grasp, and with a laugh that goes to her father's head and brings him to his feet, she flings herself into his outstretched arms and makes him sway with her to the swing of the seductive melody.

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"Ray ! Ray !" protests Mrs. Dalsimer. "Won't you please behave yourself! Do make her sit down, Jim!—stop!—you are as bad as she!"

This latter is in reference to the fact that Jim has disengaged one arm from Ray's hold, and has put that arm about his wife, Ray doing likewise from the other side. The three begin to sway in unison. If the orchestra hadn't stopped just then the interested spectators, already moved to laughter, would have witnessed a sight seldom seen on that rather exclusive balcony.

Mrs. Dalsimer and Jim drop into chairs, Jim laughing broadly, and his wife looking a bit ruffled. Ray stands between them, and stretching her arms above their heads, pronounces with mock seriousness :

"B-l-e-s-s you, my children! Be good and you will be happy!"

She is fair to look upon. A little above the medium height, straight as a sheltered sapling, her well-fleshed figure just rounding into the rich curves of early womanhood. Her face, upon which her father's eyes rest with the rapt gaze of the worshiper, is shaded at the broad forehead with a fluff of dark brown hair, which together with strongly-marked brows, seems to give special depth and effectiveness to the wide-set hazel eyes. Those eyes, now sparkling with the fun of the moment, may, one can easily imagine, melt with tenderness or flash with power, as the mood should be upon her. Her nose comes straight to its vantage-point above the mouth, where full lips curve over perfect teeth, lips that lend radiance to her smile, and would tremble with sympathy, or droop with pain, but could not hide the feeling of the soul, nor tell a lie. These lips, now wide-spread with laughter, break into cheeks upon which the roses of health bloom perennially.

Ray was not a dainty nor a delicate girl. Strength spoke from every line of her body and limbs, from her poised head, from her glowing eyes and broad-lipped mouth—a strength for burden or for battle. Immature and undisciplined as yet, it was full of promise for the future, especially to the father, whose whole life had been an expression of tireless energy. The mother often found it hard to understand or restrain.

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ST. CHARLES HOTEL, NEW ORLEANS

Ray stood but a moment in her tragic pose, and the next moment was seated on her father's knee, her arms clinging around his neck and her face hidden on his shoulder. Then this man of the world stopped laughing. Leaning his greying head against the dark brown hair of his pet, he looked at his wife through eyes that were misty with tears.

"That's always the way with you two," commented the mother, half vexed, half smiling. "Ray behaves like the spoiled child she is, and you encourage her. She makes herself perfectly ridiculous, and people blame me for her conduct. I'm like a hen mothering a duckling."

Jim was about to offer some excuse, but an extra hug from the arms about his neck choked him speechless. They were seated opposite a door of the palm room, at the café end of the balcony, and were facing the street. For that reason they did not see the appearance in the doorway of a man about Jim's age and height, a little stouter, a little grayer, but not at all bald. The newcomer had his hat in his hand, and was wiping the perspiration from his brow. He gazed

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for a moment with evident pleasure at the group before him.

“When Jim Dalsimer gets the child to sleep, an old friend would like to intrude himself.” He bowed very low.

Jim glanced round at the first sound of the voice, and exclaimed in a tone of delighted astonishment :

“Jack Linton ! By the great horn-spoon !”

Mrs. Dalsimer bowed and smiled, without an appearance of being enthusiastically cordial. Ray made a bound from her perch, put both hands on Linton’s bent head, and pushed his face down into his hat with great vehemence.

“You bad, bad boy ! How dare you walk in on us like this ? When did you leave New York ? When did you reach New Orleans ? How did you leave Elsie and ——”

Then she as suddenly turned back to her father, and hid her face once more against his shoulder, while the two men shook hands. Jim had to give Linton his left hand, which was awkward, of course, though neither he nor Linton seemed to mind.

Mrs. Dalsimer rose. She was still smiling, but there were lines in her forehead not usually begotten of smiles. “I trust you will excuse me,” she said, “I was about to retire to my room.”

“Why, Madge,—” began Jim in an expostulatory tone ; but a glance from her eyes stopped him.

“I hope Mrs. Dalsimer has benefited by her winter at Palm Beach and Pass Christian, and that I find her in good health,” said Linton, showing no surprise at her cool reception.

“I am very well, thank you,” Mrs. Dalsimer replied, with just a touch of dignity.

“I’m delighted to hear it. You certainly look as fresh and bright as you did when you were like our young lady here,—and that’s saying a good deal.” Linton spoke solemnly,—too solemnly ; there was the faintest hint of malicious humor in his tone.

“You are very kind,” retorted Mrs. Dalsimer, still smiling, but putting a touch of emphasis on the “very.” “Permit me to say good-night.” As she started to leave them Ray followed her.

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"Go back to your father, my dear. I wish to be alone." So Ray went back, tears springing to her eyes. The men were now seated, and Linton was saying :

"Seems as if I had arrived at the wrong stage of the game."

Ray again took her place on her father's knee. Jim put his hand over her eyes, pretending to merely brush back the mass of hair, and shook his head warningly as he replied:

"Don't bother about the game. It is the order of the court that you here and now answer, categorically and without reservation, the questions recently put to you by this impulsive young lady."

Laying the index finger of his right hand upon the index finger of his left hand, Linton began:

"Question one: How dare I walk in on you as I did? Answer: Because it was more dignified and comfortable than being carried. There seems to be no vehicle of conveyance running through the palm room this evening."

"Don't be ridiculous," suggested Ray, glancing up from her resting place. "When some people try to be funny they are only slow-witted and conceited. Go on, now."

"What a pleasure it would be to spank some children," muttered Linton, meditatively.

"Beast!" Ray uttered the word in her softest, most seductive tone. Then she leaned over until her fair cheek was close to Linton's.

"If I've been bad, you may punish me by kissing me right there," pointing to the rosiest spot on the cheek nearest to him. "It will give me deep pain, but I suppose I deserve it."

Linton touched his lips reverently to the glowing cheek, let his head rest tenderly against hers for an instant, and then took off his glasses and made a great show of cleaning them.

"This hot weather is an awful nuisance to a fellow who wears glasses," he blustered, wiping his eyes also as he spoke. "The perspiration will run down and make them blur until a fellow can't see."

"Mr. Linton," said Ray, very quietly, looking straight and hard at him out of her hazel eyes, "you are the biggest fraud, and the greatest baby I ever knew. Isn't he, Papa Dalsimer?"

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“Don’t ask me, my dear,” her father answered. “Linton is a lawyer, and he’ll tell you that no man is bound to incriminate himself.”

“Both of you are big frauds and babies!” asserted Ray, as she went back to her resting-place. “But my questions are not answered yet.”

“Question two,” said Linton, putting the index finger of his right hand on the middle finger of his left: “When did I leave New York? Answer: I left New York a week ago yesterday. Question three” (taking the next finger): “When did I get to New Orleans? Answer: I arrived at New Orleans to-day at five minutes past twelve, Central time. Question four: How did I leave Elsie and ——. Answer: I left Elsie very well, enjoying the agony of preparing for her summer campaign at Saratoga, the Adirondacks, the Thousand Islands, and the other places where young women lay traps for susceptible young men. She will not visit the St. Louis Fair until in the fall. As for ‘and,’ whatever or whoever that may be, I can’t answer until the question is made more definite and intelligible. To use the vernacular, ‘it’s up to you,’ Miss Ray.”

“Now don’t be horrid,” Ray almost whispered. “You know who I mean.” Then she straightened up in her impulsive manner, and looking at him with an air of bravado, she asked in the politest society tone:

“May Miss Dalsimer ask Mr. John Linton how his son, Mr. Robert Linton, was prospering when Mr. John Linton last saw him?”

“Oh! it’s Bob is it that you left hanging in the air on that indefinite ‘and.’ Well, Bob was looking a little tired after a pretty thorough grind at business during the winter and spring. I never saw him work so before. Elsie has had a hard time to get him to take her anywhere, and she has complained rather strenuously about her brother’s neglect. But Bob is to start on his vacation this very day. He will leave the grindstone for at least three months’ travel. I insisted on it. I can’t afford to have my boy break down.”

Ray’s eyes had grown larger and brighter as Linton spoke in his careless way, and there was a look of pain in them.

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"I suppose Bob will travel in Europe?" Her voice sounded hard.

Linton pretended not to notice.

"No," he said. "Bob will stick to his own country. He is planning, I believe, to do the West more thoroughly, and he may go up into the Canadian woods. He wants just a glimpse of the World's Fair, and will be in St. Louis by the last of next week."

"The last of next week," repeated Ray, rising from her father's knee and moving slowly down to an unoccupied part of the balcony, where she stood looking into the street below with eyes that saw nothing of the passing throng.

The two men watched her in silence. They uttered no word until she had come quietly back to them, had said good-night, and retired to her room.

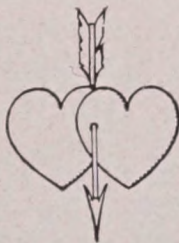
Linton laughed, but Jim frowned.

"Your good wife's scheme of keeping Ray out of Bob's company for a whole year has not accomplished its purpose," said Linton.

"No."

Jim shook his head. He looked seriously at his cigar for a minute or two, before adding:

"No, her scheme hasn't been altogether a success, but it has got my little girl into a heap of trouble. She's too much of a thoroughbred to show the strain, but she can't hide anything from her old dad. Her mother has given me little chance to talk with Ray alone since I met them at the Pass two weeks ago, and Ray's letters during the winter haven't told me much. Still I saw some things on my visits to Palm Beach that made me feel shaky about Bob's chance. Let's get something cool to drink, and I'll tell you all about it."





CHAPTER II.

MRS. DALSIMER, alone in her room, was having a struggle with herself. In their youth, down in old Kentucky, Madge Mason and Linton had been lovers. A quarrel in which she was greatly at fault drove him from her. He went to a Northern university, studied law, and settled in New York. Madge married Dalsimer, whom she met through her uncle Pelletier; Linton also married, less than three months later. The whole experience left a bitterness in Mrs. Dalsimer's soul, a bitterness she could neither justify nor expel. When, years afterward, Linton became counsel for her husband's firm, and a frequent visitor at her home, she strove to conquer her dislike, but did not fully succeed.

Linton was then a widower with two children, a boy two years older than Ray, and a girl slightly Ray's junior. The young people grew fond of each other, and Mrs. Dalsimer was thoroughly roused one day to discover that between Bob and Ray the fondness was reaching the danger line. Bob was his father's son; that was more than enough against him. Mrs. Dalsimer tided matters over until Ray graduated from Miss Gifford's school — last year — and then took Ray to Europe, where they remained until nearly Christmas. They were then home but a short time, going to Palm Beach for the rest of the winter.

At Palm Beach an invalid widow and her devoted son strongly attracted Ray, and her sympathy for the son at the time of his mother's death in February seemed to bring them into very tender relations. Mrs. Dalsimer and Ray accompanied Lionel Beeson to his Indianapolis home, and were his guests until after the funeral. Then they went to Pass Christian, near New Orleans, with no definite plan except to stay through the Mardi Gras period. Lionel was compelled to go

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to the Pacific Coast on some business, but he hoped to join them at the Pass in a little while. This he was unable to do. He wrote regularly, however, and in this had the advantage of Bob, whose only communication with Ray was through the letters of his sister ; and Elsie was not a very systematic correspondent.

Mrs. Dalsimer was as strongly in favor of young Beeson as she was against Bob Linton. That the elder Linton should arrive just now, to revive the influences of old associations, was exasperating. With Jim already on Linton's side who could tell what schemes they might contrive.

Jim had visited them at Palm Beach, and had arrived at the Pass two weeks before. It was early in June, and Mrs. Dalsimer had prolonged her stay far beyond the season, probably hoping that Lionel might reach them before they were compelled to return home. Jim was now taking them to St. Louis where they would visit the great Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Mrs. Dalsimer felt that the crisis had come.

She rose and tapped on the door of Ray's room, having heard her when she came up. Receiving no response she opened the door and stepped in. Ray, fully dressed, was lying on her bed, her face buried in the pillows. The mother's heart was touched.

"Ray, dear, what are you grieving about?"

Ray looked up.

"I'm not grieving, mamma; I am only trying to read the secret of my heart."

"Can you read it?"

"I'm not sure. I wish I were. Why is it so hard? We certainly ought to know ourselves."

"But we don't, my darling. We sometimes make mistakes, and repent them when it is too late."

Ray was silent for a time. Then she said:

"Bob is to be in St. Louis when we reach there."

The mother started, and frowned. Had Jim and Linton been plotting against her? Ray went on:

"I wish Lionel could be there, too. I don't know my heart. I might make a mistake. Must we go to-morrow? I need time to think. Can't we wait a little longer?"

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Just then Jim's footsteps were heard ; he was evidently looking for them. Mrs. Dalsimer called him, and he came in.

"Hello !" he cried. "What's the matter ?"

"Jim," said Mrs. Dalsimer, gently, "our little girl is suffering, and we must help her. We must not go to St. Louis to-morrow. Can you spare the time to wait a few days longer ?"

Jim understood. He considered a moment.

"Well," he said, "as for myself, I must go on to St. Louis; but I think I can fix matters for you folk. Why not go by boat, you two? The 'Chalmette' sails to-morrow evening, going straight through, and it will take her about seven days to make the trip. Will that be time enough? She is a fine boat, and the ride up the river will be very cool and pleasant."

Ray grasped at the suggestion.

"Papa! Mamma! Let's go that way! May we, mamma?"

"Yes, dear, if you like."

"Then I'll arrange for it in the morning," said Jim.

So it was settled. The next morning Mrs. Dalsimer was up early and sent a telegram to San Francisco which read:

"We leave to-night by steamboat 'Chalmette' for St. Louis. Will take seven days. Meet us if possible at Memphis. Don't fail."





CHAPTER III.

THEY reached the "Chalmette" the next evening half an hour before her time for sailing. Jim had in the morning made all needful arrangements, so they went directly to the hurricane deck, from which they could look down upon the animated scene. Mrs. Dalsimer was in a most amiable mood, and Ray was in a reaction from the depression of the previous night.

To one not familiar with such sights, the loading of a Mississippi steamer is full of interest. The long and varied procession of vehicles unload their burdens on the stone paving at the top of the levee; the double line of blacks hustle the freight across the boat's broad staging, and pile it with skillful accuracy where it belongs; the white overseers, with many hard words, and occasional blows, keep the negroes on the jump; everybody appears wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and even the spectator shares its thrills.

The rest of the party were at first kept amused by Ray's comments on the scene, but she gradually grew quiet, and after a time raised her eyes to the broad Canal Street with its crowded sidewalks and seemingly confused mass of trolleys.

"Dear old New Orleans!"

Jim and Linton laughed.

"It gets into the blood down here," said Linton. "I'll bet the little one is thinking of the French quarter more than of all the other and finer quarters that need no fumigation."

"I am," admitted Ray. "Who cares for a little dirt! I just love those quaint old houses, the strange people, the dear old cathedral, even the picturesque market, though it does smell to heaven."

"We might take apartments for the summer in one of those quaint old houses," suggested her father. "I hate to tear you away from it all."

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“Don’t be a mean old tease,” said Ray, affectionately squeezing his arm. “Some things are nice to look at, but would be very difficult to live with.”

“I wonder which of us she means, Linton?”

Linton’s answer was drowned in the clanging of the “Chalmette’s” great bell. It was the signal for those to get on who were going, and for those to get off who were not. The two men made their adieus, and Mrs. Dalsimer and Ray watched them as they wound their way through the excited



JACKSON PARK, NEW ORLEANS — THE OLD CATHEDRAL

crowd below, and saw them stop at the beginning of the board walk which crosses the open square.

Bedlam had broken loose about the boat. Above the rush of many footsteps, and the banging of freight upon the deck, rose the voices of the officers, stridently commanding. Some of the hurrying darkies began to shout and sing, the singing being a sort of chant, wild and mournful, but stirring to the blood.

Again the great bell sounded. The boat began to vibrate, and the scramble below was frantic. Another peal. The great staging began to creak and rise. The boat moved, backward, forward, sideways, little by little working out into the stream. Then with loud, triumphant blasts from her

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whistle the beautiful craft started on her 1,252 miles journey to the city of the World's Fair.

Jim and Linton waved their hats, and Ray and her mother waved their handkerchiefs. It was fortunate that they couldn't see how deeply affected were the two grizzled men now lost in the fading crowd.

All four were impressed that the boat was bearing to the great Exposition *a fair prize*, destined to be there lost and won. Who would be the winner? Who the loser?





CHAPTER IV.

WHEN they had sufficiently recovered their composure, Mrs. Dalsimer and Ray started to find their way down to the cabin, and they had just turned from the rail against which they had been leaning when they found themselves confronted by a small man, faultlessly dressed, smooth shaven, with a humorously good-natured face and a pair of twinkling dark blue eyes. He had his hat off, and his red hair stood straight up from his scalp.

“Well I never!” exclaimed Ray. “Where *on* earth did *you* come from?”

“Sure and if you asked me from where *off* of earth I came, your question’d be more to the point, young lady.”

“Well, we are glad to see you, Mr. Travers, wherever you came from,” said Mrs. Dalsimer. “Did Mr. Dalsimer know you were to be on board?”

“He wasn’t sure of it until I met him just as he was leaving you a little while ago. I had a bit of work up at the Lake, and didn’t think I could get away in time to take this trip. But at the last minute I managed it, and I’ll now realize one of the dreams of my life—I’ll have a sail on the Mississippi.”

A white-coated waiter approached them and informed them that dinner was about to be served.

Travers led the way down, and sat with them at the table, his presence being just the antidote they needed for the sense of loneliness and strangeness.

He was a New York man, and an authority in the world of decorative art. The Travers & Thompson studio was a gathering place of the elect. He was supposed to be a bachelor, and his apartments over the showrooms were full of curious and beautiful things gathered from the ends of the earth. He and Dalsimer had long known each other, and Travers had planned and superintended the decoration of the

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Dalsimer home, as well as that of the various offices of Dalsimer's firm. He had never visited the Dalsimers socially, and Mrs. Dalsimer's acquaintance with him was comparatively slight, but Ray had made numerous visits to his studio, and had spent many a happy hour among his precious art treasures. He had recently, as he told them, been overseeing the carrying out of plans he had drawn for some wealthy people who had built on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, and he was now going north hoping to escape an expected call to New York, and to have time to see the World's Fair before returning east.

From her seat at the table Ray had an opportunity to survey the long cabin of the beautiful "Chalmette." It was simply but tastefully decorated, electric lighted, and flanked on either side, of course, with staterooms which, while necessarily compact, were of ample size, and, judging by their own, very comfortable. Everything had been fitted up for the World's Fair season without regard to expense, as the "Chalmette" is the only steamboat running direct from New Orleans to St. Louis. For those who have the time to spare no trip could be more enjoyable. The scenery along the great river is full of variety, and there is always a refreshing breeze as the swift side-wheeler plows her way through the waters. Under the competent direction of Captain Ben Rea and his experienced pilots the element of danger is almost eliminated.

They found the dinner excellently cooked and served. The tables were set lengthwise of the cabin, and were in all their appointments suggestive of a first-rate hotel. The great crowd of passengers appeared like one big family, and the dinner hour was passed in the high spirits usual to a company starting out upon a pleasure excursion.

After dinner the three went out on deck and Travers, by permission of Mrs. Dalsimer, walked with them while he smoked a cigar. The shadows were falling and the stars beginning to shine. In that balmy air, under those darkening skies, with the moving landscape softening into obscurity, and the river around them placidly pressing on toward the sea, even Travers was hushed to silence, and they gave themselves up for an hour to wordless enjoyment.

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When again they went into the cabin they found the ladies' parlor full of people who were sitting around in the rather constrained fashion of those who meet in this general way. The constraint is easily broken, however, if someone will take the lead, and Travers was not slow in doing it. He seated himself at the piano, touched a few preliminary chords, and then sang, in a rich, sympathetic baritone, "Bonnie Sweet Bessie, the Maid of Dundee." There were tears in all eyes when he uttered the plea of the heartbroken lassie:

"O God in Heaven, take me with you too,
To be with my laddie so good and true!"

When he had completed the tender ballad, Travers sat for a moment with his fingers resting idly on the keys; then he carried their emotions to the other extreme by singing a preposterous ditty about a lover, a garden fence and a dog, with a chorus, in which the lover bids his sweetheart to "Wait till the bulldog dies, Maria." By the time it was all sung the entire company was united in the fellowship of a common merriment.

Then Travers enlisted others. A big man whose idea of singing was to bellow with all the power of his mighty lungs, roared something to Travers' despairing accompaniment. All that could be discovered from his utterance was that somebody's bright eyes haunted him still. When peace was restored, Ray poured the balm of her sweet tones upon the wounded ears of the company, singing "Every morn I send thee violets" in a manner never to be forgotten by those who heard it.

A young couple, obviously on their honeymoon, accepted an invitation to favor the audience. Smilingly and without embarrassment they went to the piano. She seated herself, and he stood beside her, his arm affectionately across her shoulders. They sang "Mary of Argyle" as a soprano and tenor duet, and when after the final repetition of the refrain,

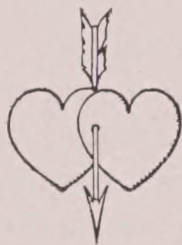
" 'Tis thy heart, my gentle Mary,
And thy artless, winning smile,
That makes this earth an Eden,
Bonnie Mary of Argyle,"

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he bent over her, and, with an exquisite unconsciousness of watching eyes, kissed her as she looked up at him, the applauding spectators were sure that her name was Mary, and that he loved her with a manly love.

The "Old Kentucky Home" gave everybody, especially the big man, a chance to join in. Travers then entertained them with some effective legerdemain, and the performance closed with a roaring "Good-night, Ladies."

So passed the first evening on board the beautiful "Chalmette."





CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Mrs. Dalsimer found a telegram which had been slipped under her door during the night, it having caught the boat at one of the landings. It read:

“Will meet boat at Memphis or sooner. Many thanks.
Hope all are well.

LIONEL.”

She did not mention this to Ray.

After breakfast Travers found a shady place for them on the deck, and they sat for a time watching and commenting upon the magnificent scenery passing like an endless panorama before them. Here the banks of the broad river were covered with stretches of forest, the trees clothed in full summer foliage, with an occasional bunch of late blossoms giving relief to the masses of green. A little farther on, the forest was broken by a clearing, and a many-acred plantation came into view, the “big house” almost hidden by trees, and the whitewashed homes of the negroes surrounded by bits of garden and patches of shrubbery. Not all the plantations are so well kept, but on the lower Mississippi to-day the tidiness and system which is making its mark on the “new south” is notable.

Travers had once or twice mentioned Jack Linton, with whom he was well acquainted, though he had not met the children, but he soon discovered that Mrs. Dalsimer preferred other topics. He did not fully understand, but he was wise. So this morning, when at last he turned their thoughts from the grandeur of Nature it was to remark:

“You mentioned last evening, Mrs. Dalsimer, that you’d like to have me describe the work done on your home since you’d been away. Shall I begin now?”

“If you will be so kind.”

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“Shall I begin at the very beginning?”

“If you please.”

“Well, then, I must begin with the day when Jim—I mean Mr. Dalsimer—came to the office of Travers & Thompson, and said he, ‘Roger,’—that was to me, you know,—‘my house over in Jersey needs redecorating, and I want you to see it.’ Said he, continuing, ‘I’ve a very handsome wife somewhere in Europe,’—that was you, ma’am,—”

Mrs. Dalsimer turned her head away, not so much to hide her amusement as to get time to press back the tears that strangely filled her eyes.

“—‘and the sweetest little sunshine of a daughter ever sent down from the skies to bless a mortal man,’—by which he meant you, Miss, I’ve no doubt.”

Ray was fairly convulsed. Travers’ whole speech had been made with the utmost gravity.

“O, Mr. Travers! Mr. Travers! you’re an outrageous humbug!” she said when she caught her breath. “Papa would never talk like that. Imagine him! You’ve just been making it all up.”

“Steady now, my dear,—steady. Perhaps he may not have used identically those same words, but the sentiments are his very own.”

“Well,” said Ray, wiping her eyes, “you may as well go on with your story.”

“So I will, with your kind permission. Said he,—I mean your father, Miss,—‘Roger,’ said he, ‘my handsome wife left few instructions as to her wishes, and I’ve no others to give you. Just use your own best judgment as to how you’ll do the work!’ And I did. I hope the result will be satisfactory. I’d like to be present when you folk first lay your eyes on it. If you aren’t well pleased I’ll be grievously disappointed.”

“We can form some idea of how we’ll like it when you have described it to us,” hinted Mrs. Dalsimer.

Travers glanced at her whimsically, and was about to proceed, when the whistle of the “Chalmette” blew three long blasts, so hoarse and nerve-racking that even he covered his ears and made an agonized grimace.

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“We’re about to make a landing,” he said, “and you’ll be interested to watch the performance. Come away with me, now, and I’ll tell my story afterwards.”

They all went forward. The boat was still at some distance from the landing, which was a good-sized village. As they approached they found there was no wharf or pier to which the steamer was to be tied, merely the bank of the river, with a freight house at a respectful distance. The old Father of Waters is too uncertain, has too many freaks of mind and action, to warrant wharf building. He may at any moment take a notion to bite a slice out of the bank, and thereby move the landing-place farther in toward the levee limit.

The “Chalmette” slowly swung in, paying due respect to the current, until she was close enough to drop her staging on the shore. Immediately the roustabouts began to carry off the freight she had to deliver, the mates encouraging them with the usual remarks, generally uncomplimentary, often profane.

But it was the shore group which interested Ray most just now. A very few white men in the group were evidently men of business, and exhibited a little semblance of alertness; but the rest of the whites were of a type Ray had never before seen. Though they had, presumably, taken the trouble to walk down to the levee for the distinct purpose of seeing the boat come in, they gave no outward sign of interest. Their faces were vacant. They stood in all possible attitudes, except the upright. Hands in their pockets, pipes or quids (or both) in their mouths, their slouch hats drawn well down over their foreheads, they appeared as inanimate and indifferent as a human being, able to expectorate, could possibly be. Ray called her mother’s attention to them, and remarked:

“Do look at those white men, mamma! Did you ever see anything so utterly lifeless and hopeless? Do they ever work, Mr. Travers, or can they be stirred up to show energy?”

“Not many of that class, my dear. They are a peculiar lot, but don’t imagine them to be typical of the southern white man. They are the drones, the loafers. We have some such people in the north, too. The difference is mainly

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that here, where the negro is at the bottom of the social scale, any man with a white skin feels a sort of birthright superiority. But the labor question is becoming serious in these days, and the time is not far away when such gentry as are posing there for our benefit will be trodden under the feet of Progress. The 'survival of the fittest' will take care of them."

The bell was just sounding its warning, and the negroes were scurrying about to get the "Chalmette" loose, when a man came riding down toward the levee, standing up in his



LOADING COTTON ON THE LEVEE, NEW ORLEANS

stirrups and waving a bit of paper. A negro ran to receive it, gave it to the mate; they both sprang on the already creaking staging, and the "Chalmette" was again under way.

It proved to be a message for Ray from her father. It read:

"Somebody will meet the boat at Memphis. Be good to him. I will send him."

Ray's cheeks flamed, and her heart beat tumultuously as she handed the paper to her mother. Mrs. Dalsimer read it frowningly. Ray looked at her, and waited for her to speak.

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The mother controlled the irritation she felt, and presently said, with a rather forced smile:

"I knew, dear, that somebody was likely to meet us there. Don't worry about it now. Let's go back to our seats and hear Mr. Travers tell what he did to our home."

So they went back, slowly and silently. The acute Travers realized that something lay beneath all this, and wondered what it might be. When they were again seated he began:

"Now this story of mine is a story of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na."

"Fab-Ri-Ko-Na?" Ray uttered the word as if it might be, as indeed it sounded, some mystic word, suggestive of the Orient and the hidden mysteries of an obsolete faith. "And who or what may Fab-Ri-Ko-Na be?"

"Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, my dear young lady, is neither who nor what. Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, in the language of the day, is 'It.' 'Tis a wall-covering that troubled decorators like myself when it first came on the market, but has proved a great blessing to us since we came to appreciate its wonderful possibilities. Less than a dozen years ago we had three methods of treating a wall. We could tint and fresco it, if the means of our patron permitted the expense; we could cover it with wall-papers, many of them very beautiful and in most respects satisfactory; or, as between the two, we could put up frames and tack fast to them certain fabrics, giving a sort of tapestry effect. But all these had their shortcomings. If we frescoed or papered, then the walls would crack, and in a little while spoil our best effects. Nearly all the papers would fade, too, and they were easily soiled or marred. If we stretched the tapestries, they would collect dust and dirt, would harbor all kinds of unpleasant livestock, and would sag and wrinkle when the weather conditions took hold of them. 'Twas all a monstrous bother, to be sure, but we made the best of it, seeing as how we had nothing else to do with.

"One day a certain man, who was destined to hand the name of Wiggin down to a grateful posterity, invented a new something. He took those fabrics we had been trying to stretch over the walls, and after dyeing them as they never before had been dyed, he put a backing on them so that they could be pasted fast to the walls, just as we paste wall papers.

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It was a bran new idea, and it took us some time to fall in line with it. But we came round to it after a while, though I was, I confess, one of the very slow ones. And when we did, we were delighted to find that it solved for us most of the problems we had been up against.

"You see how easily the use of a fabric put a stop to the bothersome cracking of walls. When a woven wall covering is used, the greatest cracker of a wall can't open a single mouth, and you never get a chance to see what its cracked up to be. The fabric holds it as tight as McManus held the pig with a greased tail."

"How could he hold that tightly?" Ray asked, in wonderment.

"Sure he caught it by the hind leg," replied Travers, looking very serious, and pushing his hair up a bit straighter.

"O!" said Ray. Then she added: "Was that considered fair?"

"No," answered Travers; "but it took four men to make him let go. And when a Fab-Ri-Ko-Na wall covering is once pasted to the wall it takes a powerful lot of pulling to make it let go."

"Are these Fab-Ri-Ko-Na wall coverings made of what they call burlap?" asked Mrs. Dalsimer.

"Some of them are," Travers replied.

"But burlaps do fade. I've a friend who had some put in her home. It looked very nice when it was first put up, but it soon faded, until it really disfigured the wall."

"My dear Mrs. Dalsimer," said Travers, "every good thing has imitations, and while imitation is said to be the sincerest flattery, the real thing sometimes suffers by the faults of the imitation. There are cheap and imperfect imitations of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na on the market; and, until the people learn to understand the situation, these will find sale, and do harm to the cause of the better goods by disappointing people and making them distrustful. One of the great merits of the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na line is that all goods are dyed under expert supervision, by processes especially adapted to the particular fibres, whether jute, cotton, or other, and with only the best dyes known to the masters in chemistry."

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"It must have been the real thing that we had on our hallways at Miss Gifford's," said Ray. "It was put on the year before I went there, and was as beautiful as ever when I left. It was a lovely green, and it made the hallway look so rich and dignified that the papers on the rooms seemed flat and cheap by contrast. Yet they were costly papers. Why is it, Mr. Travers, that the burlaps seem to have such a depth to them, and seem to make the light less glaring, without making the room darker?"

"'Tis just the fabric and its finish, Miss Ray. The fabric lets the light sink in, and gives the suggestion of depth. The light is not reflected back, as it is from papered surfaces, and so there is no glare to tire the eyes or strain the nerves."

"It certainly is delightfully restful."

"But the dyeing is not the only other merit. The backing put on the goods so that they can be pasted to the walls fills up all the texture, so that when it is pasted fast it will not harbor vermin or accumulate dirt. The distinctive surface finish is such that dust may be brushed from the walls as easily as you brush it from papers. Moreover, the goods are thoroughly treated with an antiseptic which makes them sanitary."

Just here one of the waiters approached to call them in to luncheon.





CHAPTER VI.

WHEN they left the table, Ray and her mother went to their state-room and Travers went out on deck.

During the hour a change had come over the scene. The sun was hidden behind clouds. The whole western sky was murky with a growing blackness. Along the horizon there were frequent flashes, and from the far distance came the echoes of heavy thunder.

The wind had risen, and it whistled harshly through the rigging of the boat, while on shore the forest trees bent to and fro in tremulous agitation. The green fields took on a troubled look, as if the shadow falling over them was a menace of evil. Around the boat the yellow waters began to beat in choppy waves that hit against her sides with angry slaps.

The dark, electric-laden clouds rose swiftly in the sky. The lightning grew more vivid, and the thunder deeper and more prolonged. Soon the rain-drops fell, and there was a general scattering for shelter, the women, and most of the men, seeking refuge in the cabin.

Travers found a fairly sheltered spot outside, and stood where he could watch the growing storm. His face bore a new look. Something of the trouble the fields and forests felt was reflected from his usually merry countenance, and his eyes had a far-off expression, as if he were seeing visions.

It was thus Ray found him a few moments later. She had heard the sounds of the approaching storm, and had come from her room just as the crowd rushed into the cabin. Knowing that her mother would keep herself secluded until the storm was over, Ray hurried to the deck. Storms had a strange attraction for her. Instead of inspiring fear and dread, they seemed to call up from the depths of her nature a mighty strength and exaltation. She fairly quivered with

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vitality, as if the electricity streaming from the forbidding clouds entered her blood and made her tingle with an almost superhuman life.

"Isn't it glorious!" she exclaimed, after a dazzling flash had awakened a peal which made the timid shrink in terror. Travers had not moved, and gave no sign of hearing her. She grasped his arm :

"Isn't it glorious, I say! Doesn't it bring one into living touch with the Power upon which we all depend for support — that Power which fills the earth and the heavens!"

Travers turned and looked into her glowing face and excited eyes.

"Child, child, you don't know," he muttered, slowly and as to himself. "'Tis a Power to cast down as well as to support. May its stroke never fall upon you."

Ray was amazed and startled by the change in him. His voice trembled with passionate pain. He was like an embodiment of the storm; and for the first time in her life she began to feel the terror of it. She was the more amazed when Travers turned again toward the beating storm, and, while the rain, the wind, and the thunder made a weird accompaniment, began to repeat in a dull monotone:

"But they fade when the billows roll high,
And the storm smites the face of the sea;
And the winds seem to sob and to sigh,
And to shriek, with a maddening cry,—
Yet it is not the wind, it is I!
I sob and I plead, but my plea
The sea-surges mock in their glee;
And the fair vision fades in the mist and the foam,
And I turn once again to my task and my tome."

A sob from Ray recalled him.

"Little woman," said Travers, turning to her with a wan smile. "You mustn't feel so bad about it. 'Tis the spirit of the storm that lays hold of me, and brings out what I try to repress. Don't imagine me to be morbid or unhappy. I wouldn't try to recall from their eternal rest the wife and baby taken from me so long ago. I am lonely at times, but not despairing, except when the storm carries me off my balance for a moment. I thank you for your sympathy, though

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it's a shame you should be burdened with my sorrows. See! the sun is breaking through. The storm is over, and we will soon forget it. If you will bring your mother, we'll find a dry spot, and I'll go on with my Fab-Ri-Ko-Na story."

Ray left him and went back into the cabin, pondering sadly upon the experience of the last half hour, and reflecting with the surprise that only youth can feel upon the blindness and ignorance with which we walk among our fellowmen. As we grow older we know only too well that every man, every woman, wears a mask; and that the mask of Comus may hide a soul battling for life against the powers of darkness.

She found her mother and brought her out on deck where now the sun was shining as freely as if no storm-cloud had ever interfered. In Travers, too, there was no sign of storm. His face was humorously smiling, as it was wont to be, and he greeted them with:

" 'Tis a very wet day, wid th' rain falling down;
And me wid me marketin' ready for town;
'Tis a very wet day, says Paddy Mahone,
A very wet day, don't ye think ?

'Tis a very *dry* day, all in spite of your rain.
An' me wid a thirst on me, cruel as Cain!
'Tis a very *dry* day, says Barney Malone,
When a fellow has nothing to drink ! "

In the rollicking tone, and the expressive pantomime with which this was rendered there wasn't the slightest reminder of the deep passion so recently uppermost in him. He found seats for them.

"It was a hard storm," said Mrs. Dalsimer. "I'm glad it was so soon over. I'm rather nervous about the lightning."

"Yes," assented Travers, "it was rather hard while it lasted, but it has left the trees and fields all the greener and sweeter for it, and even the air is cooler and more refreshing. You ought to be the better fitted to hear another installment of my Fab-Ri-Ko-Na story."

"Suppose you take us right to our home, and introduce us to it as it looks since you decorated it," suggested Mrs. Dalsimer. "You can explain the materials as you go along."



THE "CHALMETTE"

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"Yes, do, Mr. Travers," said Ray. "It will seem almost like visiting home itself, and I would dearly love to see it."

"Very well," assented Travers. "We'll imagine our airship to be waiting. Will you kindly step in, ladies? Are you seated? Take one deep, full breath—enough to last you just two minutes. Ready? Now, we're off! See that little blur down there? That's the landscape with the wrinkles all smoothed out. Don't the old machine buzz! Now, mind yourselves, and hold on. I am about to stop. There! we are once more in the land of the Misquitobites—in other words, we are in New Jersey almost within sight of New York, and our machine is settling gently down in front of your own home.

"You can see how it has been improved in outward appearance by a little paint. How do you like the color combinations?"

Both expressed themselves as pleased.

"I'm well acquainted with the man who made the selections," said Travers, "and he'll be glad to know of your satisfaction."

Ray looked at him and laughed.

"I think I could guess the man's name," she declared.

"Don't do it, then, and spoil the joke," urged Travers, whimsically. "But let me open the door. I have a key, and we needn't bother the housekeeper. Here we are in the vestibule. You see I left the oak wainscoting as it was, only freshened it up a bit. But look at that wall. How do you like that goods, says I. Says you, 'it's very beautiful, but what is it?' Says I, its called Hessian-Ko-Na, a basket-weave fabric. I used this bright yellowish green, because it so well suited this entrance. Everything in such cases depends on the situation and surroundings of the house, and its relation to light. Each house must be studied by itself. Here above the wainscoting is a printed border, made at the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na mills. It is nine inches wide, and on a brownish red ground has a Renaissance design in scarlet. I divide it from the wall by a half-inch gold moulding. At the top of the wall there is another strip of the same border, with the gold moulding at the bottom of it. The ceiling,

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you see, is of another Hessian-Ko-Na, or basket-weave, a lighter, almost a lichen green. And there you are."

"Well," commented Ray, "that is certainly a change from the old decorations. I never did like the paper you had put on our vestibule and hall. Why didn't you use Fab-Ri-Ko-Na three years ago?"

"I'm afraid I hadn't fully recovered from my suspicions of it at that time. But, speaking of the hall, let us now enter that part of the scene. You will see that here, too, I have discarded the paper, which was very fine in its day. The wainscot and woodwork have been made a deep golden oak, but the full wall above the wainscot is, as you see, a dull blue, carried up through the frieze, which is stenciled in festoons and wreaths. It gives the hall a solid, dignified appearance, which every hallway should possess.

"But, 'Will you walk into my parlor?' said the Spider to the Fly. And when you have seen it, I'm sure you will permit the Spider to add: 'Tis the prettiest little parlor, ma'am, that ever you did spy.'

"Here even the woodwork is changed. It is now white and gold. The walls are a pale apple green Krash-Ko-Na, and the carpet and draperies are rose colored. The gilt furniture is newly upholstered in a Marie Antoinette stripe of rose color and green on a white ground. The ceiling, which is covered with prepared canvas, has a central panel bordered with white and gold relief work, the panel being a delicate green, and the style a very pale rose color. You see the room is a perfect harmony, delightfully dainty, as a drawing room should be, and each item has been selected in accordance with the fitness of things, which characterizes modern decorations. Not only must each room, with all its appointments, be a complete harmony in itself, but all rooms that open directly into each other, as do the rooms on the lower floor, must agree with one another, each being a part of a general scheme.

"There's another point not always given due consideration; it is that the living rooms of a house must always, so far as possible, be decorated with due regard for the lady or ladies of the house. Men in a house are simply negative elements; their clothes and their complexions are not influenced by their

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surroundings. But with the ladies it is different. If the lady of the house has certain fine points in her appearance, those points may be brought out more strongly by her wearing apparel, and by her surroundings,—or they may be entirely neutralized. The fact is that a home is merely a larger garment for its mistress, and it may be made becoming or unbecoming to her. The good decorator will seek to make it becoming. And he can find nothing so well adapted to that end as a woven wall fabric.

“Don’t you think that a queer idea?” Ray asked, rather skeptically.

“I think it a very just one,” her mother responded, without waiting for Travers to reply.

“Come into the library, now,” Travers went on. “Here we have the same mahogany bookcases, and above them a light brown burlap all the way up, with a Renaissance frieze stenciled on it. Here the woodwork and furniture, even the rug, correspond with the walls and the ceiling. The latter is of prepared canvas tinted a cream color, with a border of bay leaves in relief running around about fifteen inches from the cornice, and a circle of delicate relief ornamentation paneling the center.

“And now, the dining room is next in order.” Travers waved his hand as if inviting them to pass on before him.

“Behold it! A deep brown burlap runs from the base-board to the plate-rail, above which a rich red burlap reaches to the cove, where a Colonial stencil design has been used for ornament. The fireplace has been made over with blue tiles, and the woodwork is all of a golden oak. There is a new rug on the floor, a deep crimson with a border of crimson and old gold. ’Tis a very cheerful room, as dining rooms ought to be. There is an intimate relation between the mind and the digestive functions, even if we refuse to believe what some declare, that man thinks through his stomach.

“Speaking of that carries us to the kitchen. Here a dull green oak wainscot is surmounted by a Prepared Burlap which is made to be painted on, and we have covered it with a light green gloss paint. The ceiling canvas is painted with a cream-colored flat paint. All the walls are now wash-

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able, and dirt will be at a disadvantage. In the pantry and laundry the same result has been produced. You can keep them clean, and yet they are an artistic part of an artistic home."

Travers looked at his watch.

"The afternoon is slipping away, but if you are not tired, I can finish my story."

They urged him to continue.

"Well, by your permission, we'll now take a look upstairs. You will notice that we carry a lighter shade of blue over the upper hall with a tinted ceiling to match. When we come to upstairs rooms we have a very different condition than that which prevails on the lower floor. Here the rooms are for privacy, and may be treated individually according to the taste or requirements of those who are to occupy them.

"We will take the guest chamber first. The wall is a deep yellowish green Krash-Ko-Na with a frieze in cream-tinted relief, and the ceiling canvas in a very light tint of the same green as in the walls.

"Then, here is your own room, madam. This beautiful wall is a Krash of a tint which is as near to ashes of roses as anything. A light blue frieze is delicately stenciled, and the cream-tinted ceiling has stenciled corners and center. It's all very simple, but you'll have no headaches from the distractions of puzzling designs, and your sleep will be more peaceful in a room so quiet and unobtrusive.

"As to the little woman here, we kept her taste in mind. We used this delicate blue Krash for the lower part of the wall, a harmonizing wall paper for the upper third, printed in an effective floral design, and the ceiling canvas tinted to carry up the color tone of the walls, and there you have as dainty a nest as ever sheltered a princess of the blood royal.

"All the other rooms are equally up to date, and when you have time to examine them you will see how well the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na wall coverings can be used in combination with wall papers and other decorative materials. Very often merely a dado or a frieze of burlap or Krash will lend a touch of added dignity or beauty to a papered wall."

"But you will want to see Jim's,—I mean Mr. Dalsimer's,—

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room now. Here it is. It has been given a leather effect, the lower two-thirds being in burlap of one shade of a leathery tan, the upper third in Krash of another and lighter shade, the ceiling tinted in tone with the walls. The furniture is leather, and all the wood-work is made to correspond."

"The decorations all seem comparatively simple," suggested Ray.

"Simplicity, my dear, is the key-note of modern decorative art. We are happily getting out of a period in which a vulgar love of display, and a profound ignorance of art, combined to lead us into all manner of extravagances. The new spirit in our art has called into the decorative field many sincere and inspired artists; it has led manufacturers to reach out after new and better materials; it has given the architect and the decorator new ideas and ideals, or has thrown down the barriers behind which, heretofore, they have been shut away from the higher things.

"But, let's now take a walk around. We've had enough of decorations for to-day, and it will soon be eating-time again. Did I tell you I must leave you when we reach Vicksburg to-morrow? No? I will take the train from there to Memphis, where I have a business appointment. It may mean that I must go on to New York at once, but I am hoping to get to St. Louis for a little while, and will, if possible catch the "Chalmette" as she passes Memphis. I never before had the time to take this sail on the river, and a little such rest will do me good."

They walked about until called to the evening meal, Travers going back to his amusing banter, and keeping them laughing constantly at his quaint but witty humor. During the evening he was again the life of the company.

The next day was one of those rare days when Nature seems on her best behavior. The breeze was fresh enough to offset the heat of the sun, and the scenes along the great river were exquisitely beautiful. Early in the day they passed old Natchez, sitting high upon its bluffs, the long stretch of fine estates adjacent to it just barely visible from the boat. And all through the day plantation succeeded forest, and forest succeeded plantation, with an occasional village, or a

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small landing-place to keep the panorama from becoming monotonous.

During most of the morning Mrs. Dalsimer and Travers were busy with their correspondence, and it left Ray to her own resources. She took a book out on deck, and found a place to sit, but she read very little. The magic of the scene was upon her, and she merely dreamed the hours away. The two figures most in her thoughts at all times were in her dreams, and she felt a sense of coming events, but only in a languid way. Life as it was that day was too sweet and peaceful to admit of interference from either yesterday or to-morrow.

So strongly was that mood upon her in the afternoon, that Travers, though he put forth some effort, could not rally her out of it. Her mother responded more than usually to his humor, but he felt, after a time, that Ray must have become bored by his company, and he left them and remained on another part of the deck.

Mrs. Dalsimer, finding Ray absorbed and unsocial, and not reluctant to have her think out, as was likely she was doing, some of the serious problems before her, presently withdrew quietly and went to her stateroom, where, by leaving the door open, she could sit and read in comfort.

It was getting well toward evening before Ray came out of her reverie. She was surprised to see how nearly the day was spent, and remembered remorsefully how selfish her absorption must have appeared. She looked around the deck and discovered Mr. Travers sitting alone by the stern-rail, his back to the rail, and his face turned toward her. He seemed to have been watching her. She rose and went to him.

"I'm afraid I was rude to you this afternoon, Mr. Travers," she said regretfully. "The fact is, I was dreaming dreams."

"Was *he* in them?" Travers asked, with his smiling face expressing a forgiveness he did not need to speak.

"*They* were," answered Ray, looking down blushing. Travers whistled.

"And don't you know which of the 'they' is 'he'?"

Ray shook her head, looking distressed.

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“Well!” exclaimed Travers. “If that don’t beat me! If it was a political case, and the two candidates had the convention so equally balanced, I should say this was the opportune moment for the dark horse to be trotted in. It isn’t likely you’d give an old fellow like me any consideration?”

Ray answered his ringing laugh with a rather hysterical giggle, but tears were coming close to her eyes.

“Please don’t make fun of me,” she pleaded. “I trust you, Mr. Travers, and believe you would help me if you could.”

“Would I? try me, little woman. If you care to tell me all about it, perhaps things may come round so I can be of some use.”

And there in the fading of the afternoon, while the sun was putting forth his dying glories, when even the light breeze was sinking away as if, with the birds, it was seeking rest, Ray told Travers her story, and her perplexity. She found him quick to understand and sympathise. When they were called to the evening meal, she felt that she had gained a new and valued friend. That he was to leave them sometime during the evening—for they were nearing Vicksburg—threw a shadow over it all; but he assured her he would do his best to rejoin them at Memphis.

Before they retired that night, he had gone. The two succeeding days were lacking in the strong human interest he had given to the trip thus far, but they passed pleasantly, except for Ray’s growing nervous excitement. When, on the fourth day they drew near to Memphis, and she knew that the crisis was at hand, she did what she would never have believed it possible for her to do, she ran into the cabin, and shut herself up, leaving her mother to receive Bob if he came.





CHAPTER VII.

THAT day, in the lobby of the Hotel Gayosa in Memphis, two young men, who had arrived the evening before, were paying their bills, preparatory to leaving. A rather small, carefully dressed man with a humorous face stood at the clerk's desk, very near them. They heard him say :

“You're sure they'll send the carriage in time, so that there'll be no danger of missing the ‘Chalmette’?”

The clerk assured him.

“Where is the nearest place to buy some flowers?” again queried the small man, taking off his hat to wipe his brow, and incidentally revealing the fact that his hair stood on end.

The clerk informed him.

He was about to step away when the two young men, as if with one accord, came toward him. The tall one with the brown hair and mustache, whose kindly eyes gleamed through glasses, spoke first:

“Excuse me, sir, but do I understand that you are going up the river on the ‘Chalmette,’ and have arranged for a carriage?”

“Those are the facts, sir,” answered the small man smilingly, “and I should say you understood them correctly.”

“It happens that I also am going that way,” said the young man. “I wonder whether we might not have a carriage for two, and go down together?”

Before the small man could reply, the other young fellow, him of the lighter hair, the smooth, boyish face and the blue eyes that needed no extraneous aids, broke in laughingly:

“Why not make it for three? It seems we are to be fellow voyagers. Shall we?”

“Sure,” said the small man. And the clerk was instructed accordingly.

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"Now, about some flowers," said the tall young man. "Where did the clerk say you would find them?"

He was informed.

"Well, let's go and find them quick and get back. That boat is likely to arrive any minute. I am to meet some ladies on her." Thus the tall fellow.

"So am I," said smooth-face.

"So am I," quoth he of the upright hair.

And thereupon they went out together. They soon came back, each bearing two gorgeous bouquets. The coincidence seemed to reach even to the number of ladies to be met.

They had been back but a few minutes when the carriage appeared. They sprang in, and were soon out again, making for the staging of the "Chalmette," each bearing his fragrant burden, and each followed by a darkey, carrying his baggage.

As they stepped up the staging each glanced toward the crowded hurricane deck, and waved his flowers. Once on board each gave hurried instructions as to the temporary disposal of the baggage, and on the heels of each other they hurried upstairs. Without breaking ranks they marched together until they confronted the same smiling woman. The tall young man was slightly in advance.

"My dear Mrs. Dalsimer, I am delighted to see you again. May I offer you one of these?"

"Thank you Lionel; it will give me great pleasure." Mrs. Dalsimer took the bouquet, and shook hands with Mr. Beeson.

Smooth-face was next. His blue eyes gleamed with the humor of the situation. He repeated, probably for convenience only, the recently established formula:

"My dear Mrs. Dalsimer, I am delighted to see you again. May I offer you one of these?"

Mrs. Dalsimer's smile was not quite so spontaneous this time, but she was equal to the emergency:

"Thank you, Bob; it will give me great pleasure." And she shook hands with Mr. Linton.

He of the upright hair now advanced. He bowed very low.

"My dear Mrs. Dalsimer, I am delighted to see you again. May I offer you one of these?"



'MAY I OFFER YOU ONE OF THESE?'

A Fair Prize

By this time Mrs. Dalsimer's gravity was nearly lost. It was with a great effort that she repeated her part of the ceremony. Then all four burst into uncontrollable laughter. Travers was first to find his speech.

"To save time, Mrs. Dalsimer, I wish to ask, in the name of these young gentlemen and for myself, where is Miss Ray?"

"We will go down into the cabin, and see," replied Mrs. Dalsimer, leading the way, the procession following in single file. An analysis of the thoughts and feelings of the quartette would be interesting. Once in the cabin, Travers stopped the others, and talked to them like a stage manager planning a dramatic climax. The cabin was nearly deserted. Most of the people were out on the deck, looking at the city and the busy scene on the levee.

Ray had not been entirely idle during her retreat. She had given some considerable thought and care to her personal appearance. When she heard footsteps approach and stop near her door, she was still putting nervous touches to her toilette. She stood quiet, listening, while her heart beat fiercely in her breast.

A knock. "Ray, come out; I wish to see you!" It was mamma's voice.

Another knock. "Ray, come out; I wish to see you!" It was the voice of Mr. Travers, and her relief was so great that she started toward the door.

Another knock. "Ray, come out; I wish to see you!" She stopped, and put her hand over her heart, as if to hold it in bounds. It was Bob's voice.

Another knock. "Ray, come out; I wish to see you!" She almost choked. Was it possible? How could it be! Yet it was — it was — Lionel's voice! In her amazed excitement she wanted to laugh and she wanted to cry. She did neither. Summoning up the strength she could rely upon in critical moments she walked to the door, opened it, and stood in perfect self-possession while the three men, bowing as one, knelt before her, and laid their tribute of flowers at her feet.

It was all very ridiculous, to be sure, but she dared not yield to any form of emotion. She merely said:

"You will save me from having to bend over uncomfort-

A Fair Prize

ably if you will all be kind enough to rise, and hand the flowers to me in the ordinary way."

They did as she asked them. She greeted each very quietly, and sat down with them while her mother, quickly seeing what was needed, took the lead in a half hour of gay chat. Ray gradually roused herself, and entered into the conversation with much of her natural animation, but it was not easy, and the others were conscious that it was not, though they exerted themselves to hide any evidence of such consciousness.

All that evening Ray and Travers were inseparable, whether the party were on deck or in the cabin. Bob and Lionel were kept at a distance. It was so again the next morning, and all the next day. Try as they would they could not get a word with Ray alone. Finally, toward evening, they went to a quiet part of the deck, lighted cigars, and sat down together.

"See here, Mr. Beeson," said Bob, after a rather long silence, "I think it would be easier for all concerned if we—that is, you and I—had an understanding. I love Miss Dalsimer, and I think you do. Am I right?"

"You are right."

"I came to meet this boat in the hope that I could get a chance to ask her to marry me. I suspect that you had some such purpose on your own behalf. Am I right again?"

"You are right again."

"Good. So far we meet frankly. It is evident that somewhere there are cross purposes at work. Mrs. Dalsimer, for some reason, has never taken to me, but she seems very cordial to you."

"She has always been so. She is very kind."

"On the other hand, Mr. Dalsimer and my father are like brothers, and he treats me as if I were his own son."

"On the few occasions when I met him he was barely polite."

"It seems, then, that Mrs. Dalsimer favors you, while Mr. Dalsimer is probably on my side. That much is plain. Now the important thing to find out is which side Miss Dalsimer favors. How are we to do it?"

A Fair Prize

"I'm sure I don't know," said Lionel, sadly. "I wish I did. I'm afraid that between her father and her mother, Miss Dalsimer is having a hard time. Much as I love her, I would go away at once, and leave the happiness to you, if I were certain that it would bring happiness to her."

"I believe it, Beeson," said Bob, putting out a hand, which Lionel shook cordially. "I believe it, and I honor you for it. If I have to give her up, the fact that I yield her to so good a fellow will be my greatest comfort. I think I can say, as sincerely as yourself, that I love her enough to wish her to be truly happy. It may not be the most romantic or sentimental way of looking at such a question, but it is certainly the least selfish and heathen."

"Here comes Mr. Travers," said Lionel. "He seems a very good sort, and is the court favorite at present. Suppose we explain our position to him, and ask his advice."

Accordingly they took Travers into their confidence. He was greatly touched and pleased by the sensible and honorable views they expressed.

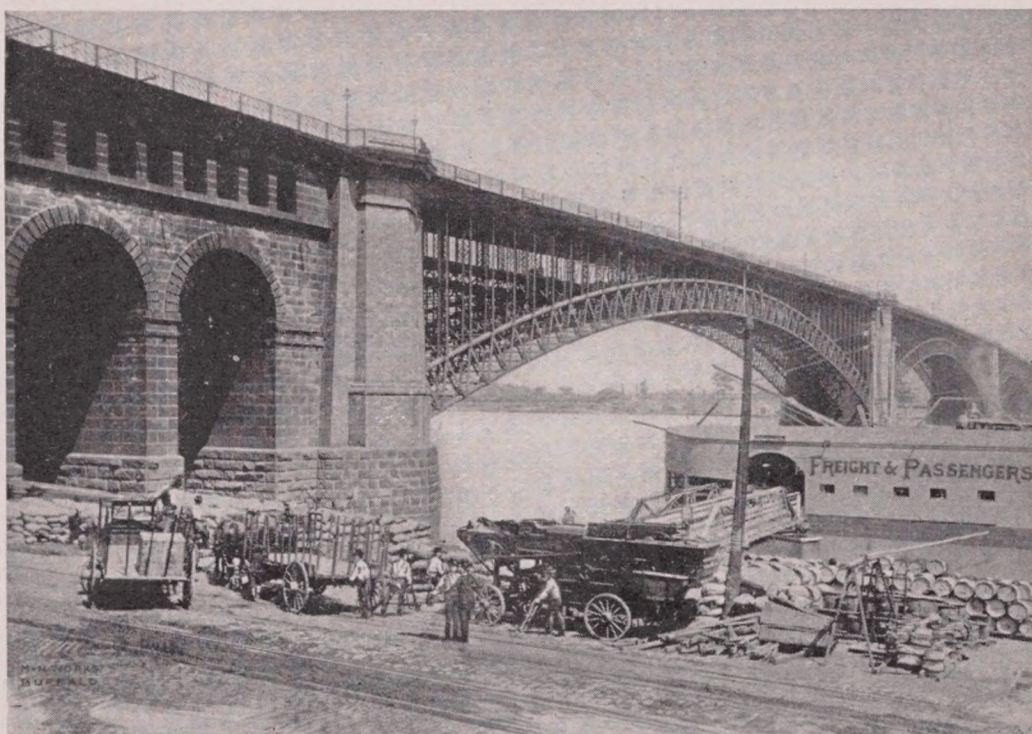
"My dear boys," said he, "by all the traditions you should be mortal enemies. You should be going about with the wrath of hades in your hearts, waiting for a chance to undo and destroy one another. But 'tis far better as it is. My advice is that you carry your friendly agreement a step further. Let each of you write a letter, telling Miss Ray what you came to tell, and explaining your feelings toward her and toward each other. Promise to make no verbal reference to the matter until in some way she indicates which one, if either, she chooses. That will place the matter directly in her own hands, and will lessen the constraint in your association with her. I will see that your letters are delivered."

It was done. Before Ray went to her room that night she had the two letters. She read them. They expressed in noble terms the messages they conveyed. Their writers were lifted higher, if possible, in her esteem. But so equally did they rise, that when she had read the messages, her decision was as far off as before.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE rest of the trip was uneventful. There was less constraint in the relations between the young people, but Ray found it hard to keep up appearances. The consciousness that both Bob and Lionel were watching and waiting for some sign from her made her position difficult.



THE EAD'S BRIDGE, ST. LOUIS

Still they were merry enough, helped on by the irresistible Travers ; and, when the "Chalmette" drew up to her resting-place at St. Louis, almost under the shadow of the great Ead's Bridge, and Jim and Linton met them, Ray sprang to her father's arms with her childish gaiety, and the others showed no evidence of the strain they had been under.

Jim had secured accommodations for all except Lionel and Travers, at one of the new hotels not far from the Fair grounds. He welcomed them heartily, and induced them to

A Fair Prize

go with the rest, assuring them that extra room could easily be found. It was early evening when the boat arrived. They reached their hotel just in time to dress for dinner. As they sat around the table, Ray was the merriest of them all; and no one looking on could have imagined that any deep undercurrents of feeling were moving that gay company toward a momentous decision.

The next day they all went out to the Fair grounds. Near the Lindell Entrance they found the automobiles which carry visitors around the grounds, and securing one they began a comfortable tour of inspection.

There have been World's Fairs before, planned on gigantic scales, wrought out with skill little short of marvelous; but never before has the world seen anything so stupendous in proportions, so beautiful in conception, so artistic in execution, as this Fair which commemorates the purchase from France, for \$15,000,000, of that imperial western domain, more than a million square miles in area, now forming the Indian Territory, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Montana, and part of Idaho.

Into the vast ivory-tinted palaces of this Exposition the whole world has poured its treasures of industry and art. All the processes and products that are the ripened fruit of centuries of civilization are displayed.

The automobile, by Jim's direction, carried the party swiftly around the grounds until it brought them to the beautiful Festival Hall, at the top of the hill, from which they could take in, at one sweeping glance, the general features of the Fair. Here they dismounted, and walked around to the front of the Hall. On either side of them curved the Colonnade of States, each State and Territory formed of the great Purchase being symbolically represented by a sculptured group. Below them gushed and plashed the fountains and cascades, foaming down between rows of heroic statues until their waters fell into the great lagoon. Straight in front, down on the level, the Grand Basin, covered with picturesque gondolas, stretched away to encircle with its many-bridged arms the great white palaces.

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The whole scene was too wonderful, too unreal, too perfect in its dream-like splendor, for comment. Silently the group stood and surveyed it. Ray's first feeling was one of astonishment; then came a profound awe, as if she stood before the creation of some master artist; finally, the dominant feeling was incredulity. It was too vast, too exquisitely glorious, to be real.

"Please pinch me, papa,—I want to be sure that I'm awake. Is it all real? Won't it fade away?"

"Not to-day, daughter; and yet it's not very real. The marble palaces are principally lath and plaster, and the statuary will do well if it doesn't crumble into fragments before the Fair is over."

"That's very true for you, sir," said Travers. "Still, whether marble or plaster it would amount to the same thing in the end. The palaces of Egypt and Babylon, the temples of Greece and Rome,—where are they? And what's the difference, after all, between a few months and a few years? The things men make must decay."

"Travers," said Jim, menacingly, "if you utter another sentiment like that we'll throw you right down there into the wet, wet water. No intelligent person has stood here, or will stand here, without thinking just what your brilliant mind has suggested to you. It was a common thought at the Pan-American, at Chicago, at the Centennial, at the burning of Rome, at the destruction of Jerusalem, at the fall of Babylon, at the time of the Flood. If you can't think anything new about such a scene as this, don't venture, at all events, to think aloud."

"But, papa," protested Ray, "I was thinking the same thing myself."

"So was I," said her father. Then turning to the rest of the company he said: "All who were thinking that same thought hold up your right hand." Up went a hand from each one, including Mrs. Dalsimer. "There," said Jim, triumphantly, "that proves what I said."

"Stop your nonsense, Papa Dalsimer," Ray ordered, with the imperial air she often put on when addressing Jim. "Stop your nonsense, and tell us which building is which and what."

A Fair Prize

So Jim pointed out the Government Building far in the distance on the right. Nearer, on the same side, the Hall of Mines and Metallurgy, with the Egyptian entrances, and behind, partly hidden by it, the Palace of the Liberal Arts. Still nearer, across the Venetian east lagoon, were the Education and Manufactures buildings. Then came the Grand Basin as the centerpiece, at the distant end of which towered the Louisiana Purchase Monument. On the left of the Basin stood the Electrical Building, the eastern façade of the Palace of Varied Industries showing in the distance, and across the west lagoon were the Machinery and Transportation buildings.

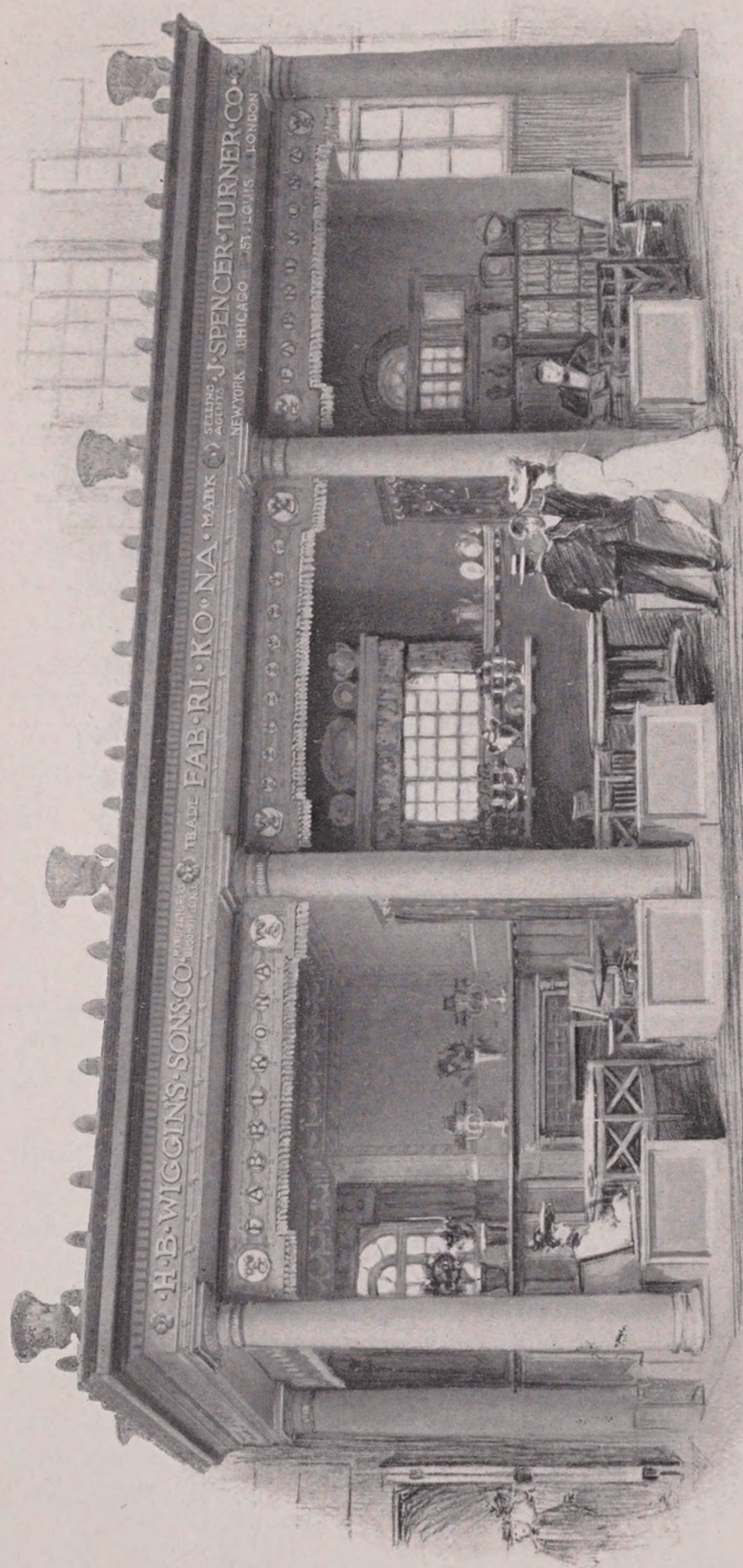
In the architecture of this wonderful assemblage of structures, what variety, what unity! No two alike, yet each related to all. . Many spirits had been evoked, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Classic, and Modern; but over all, modifying, adapting, unifying all, was the one Master Spirit, the spirit of the Twentieth Century, scientific, progressive, cosmopolitan, triumphant; laying the ages under tribute, drawing from each whatsoever it might possess that would serve to enrich or adorn the Present, and reveal to an aspiring world some glimpses of a more glorious Future.

A long time was spent in drinking in this wonderful view, and in locating, by Jim's assistance, the many contributory features of the great Exposition. At last, consulting his watch, he said:

"This tick-tick of mine declares that the next thing on the programme should be luncheon. Suppose we visit one of these restaurants here on the terrace, and then look through one of the big buildings. Which shall be the first?"

"If the company doesn't object," said Travers, "I would suggest the Varied Industries. I have several friends among the exhibitors there, and I could get in a bit of business while you folk were enjoying yourselves. But don't let me drag you away from anything you'd rather see. I can go in there by myself, and meet you again this evening."

As no one objected it was decided to go there. An hour later they were at the main entrance of the Palace of Varied Industries, having first taken a slow trip along the Pike, getting a superficial glance at the bewildering con-



THE FAB-RI-KO-NA BOOTH
Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Mo., 1904

A Fair Prize

glomeration of interesting things gathered there for the entertainment of the curious.

As they entered the Varied Industries, Ray, whose memory of the great Chicago exhibition was rather vague, was amazed at the immensity of the structure, and the almost endless rows of exhibits.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed, "Can any one see all there is to be seen if this is merely one building out of hundreds?"

"Don't try to see everything at once, my dear," said Travers. "It's like trying to see a circus with three rings and a stage all at one sitting. You miss too much. Let me take you to the booth in which I am most interested. You will be interested, too, after what I told you on the boat."

He led the way through the main aisle until he came nearly to the doorway leading out into the colonnade which traverses the central quadrangle. There he turned to the right, and they found themselves before a handsome booth built so as to form three beautifully decorated and furnished rooms.

The booth was designed by Mr. Edmund Lewis Ellis, architect, in collaboration with Mr. T. M. Turner, both of New York, on the general lines of a Roman loggia, and all the ornamentation was designed and modeled with a view to securing perfect harmony of detail. These loggias, of which there are many in the gardens of Italy, are built as places of shelter, and some of them are celebrated for the beauty of their architecture, and the exquisite character of their decorations and furnishings. In earlier days the great masters often contributed to the decoration of these shelters, and in some of them frescoes by Titian and Raphael may still be seen. Among the most celebrated is the Loggia Dei Lanzi, in Florence, built in 1376 by Benci di Cione and Simone di Talenti.

While the exterior of the booth was designed simply to enclose the exhibit, it was so arranged that its openness should give a perfect view of the interior, and present an inviting and hospitable appearance. The vases surmounting the columns were direct casts from a beautiful Florentine vase, the original of which was accidentally destroyed. The casts are valuable and splendid specimens of Florentine art.

The three rooms were not designed in any particular style,

A Fair Prize

but were made to illustrate in a measure certain rooms in a modern house.

The room nearest the main aisle represented in miniature a drawing room decorated in white, green, and gold, the furniture a willow green, and the hangings made to correspond. The lower portion of the walls was broken into ornamental panels and the walls were bordered by a stenciled frieze of unique design. There was a simple fireplace in white and gold with a light bluish green dull tile facing and hearth. The general effect was somewhat formal and dignified, as it should be in such a room.

The middle space was fitted up as a dining room, the dark woodwork and brown and green burlaps combined in the modern Colonial style. The furniture was in Cremona brown. The soft yellow windows had a Greek pattern worked on them which gave them a latticed effect.

The third room was arranged for a library, the woodwork French walnut, the walls above the bookcases covered with dark green burlap, the ceiling beamed, with a golden background between the beams giving a delightful glow. The furniture was weathered gray.

In all these rooms the wall coverings were of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, exhibiting in a practical way the various fabrics made under that trade mark. The dainty Krash Ko-Na, the solid, dignified burlaps, the prepared canvas, the Hessian weaves were shown as they appear when appropriately used and properly combined. While the illustration was far from complete, enough was shown to make clear the wonderful possibilities these woven wall coverings present to the architect, the decorator, and their patrons.

Under the lead of Travers the party walked through the booth, examining and enjoying the rooms and their contents, until they came to the library, where they seated themselves. Every facility for comfort and convenience had been provided. A desk was there with pens, ink, and stationery for the visitor, and ample resting places were ingeniously contrived to make the most of the available space. The gentleman in charge and his assistants were very busy at the moment, showing to an interested audience from sample books, sketches and ready

A Fair Prize

decorated pieces of the fabrics, the various qualities and uses of the line. One young man was busy stenciling upon the burlaps and Krashes with Ko-Na-Colors, using the modern stencil system which produces results equal to high-grade hand painting.

A lady attendant was busy explaining to an appreciative group the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na embroidery work with raffia on burlap, which is so popular just now for making couch pillow covers, table covers and hand-worked burlap portieres. While she talked she kept her hands busy on an unfinished bit of work, demonstrating the ease with which the raffia lends itself to the production of most charming effects, especially in connection with the burlaps. The raffia was dyed in many colors, and, although the strands looked coarse, was capable of being shredded to the fineness of a silk thread without loss of strength.

"Well," said Ray, after they had watched the workers awhile, "this, then, is the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na exhibit. If our house looks as well as these beautiful rooms, we shall hardly find fault."

Just then the gentleman in charge approached, and Travers introduced his party. The gentleman asked them if they had sufficiently understood the meaning of the booth and its decorations, and then told them some facts concerning its furnishings.

"This furniture," said he, "is what is known as the Mission style. It is from the warerooms of Jos. P. McHugh & Co., of New York. Mr. McHugh first introduced this so-called style, and is to-day its accepted exponent. It is all manufactured under his supervision, and each separate article is given an artistic individuality. Mr. McHugh has demonstrated that the fantastic elaborateness of design and ornamentation so characteristic of what has been deemed fine furniture, was not only inconsistent with the purpose for which furniture is made, but was equally at variance with the simplicity which is the prime element in all true art. A Mission chair is solid — made to be sat on. A Mission table is a frank, honest table. Each piece bears the stamp of its purpose. And yet, so excellent is the design, and so skillful

A Fair Prize

the craftsmanship, each piece is also the clear expression of an artistic idea, wrought out with sympathy and insight.

“The lighting fixtures in this and the other rooms were specially designed and made for this booth by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Co., of New York, whose high standing as decorative designers and manufacturers is known in all lands. The globes are of Fabrile glass, which is a discovery and invention of Mr. Louis Tiffany, and is considered one of the most beautiful and valuable contributions of the nineteenth century to the allied arts. The Greeks and Egyptians made a similar glass, but for many centuries the secret was lost until rediscovered and developed by Mr. Tiffany.”

The party then went outside of the booth to look at it from the front, and were delighted with the complete harmony between the color schemes of the various rooms. Glancing up to the frieze of the entablature resting upon the supporting Tuscan pillars they read, in the section over the parlor, “H. B. Wiggin’s Sons Co., Manufacturers, Bloomfield, N. J. ; over the dining-room section, “Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Woven Wall Coverings”; over the library section, “J. Spencer Turner Co., Selling Agents, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, London.”





CHAPTER IX.

AMID the distractions of the Fair, Ray's mind had been wholesomely diverted during the day, but her heart-trouble could not be forgotten. Each night, in spite of her weary body, she had spent a great deal of time puzzling over her peculiar situation. Bob and Lionel were equally attentive and considerate. Neither could be said to outdo the other in solicitude for her comfort and pleasure. Neither allowed himself to appear sad or anxious, but both followed her every movement with eyes full of love and hope. Quiet, gentle, scholarly Lionel; strong, impulsive, gay-hearted Bob,—which should it be?

Her mother had been gracious to both, but unmistakably favored Lionel; Bob, on the other hand, had been her father's favorite. Both father and mother had been very kind to her, and had in no direct way attempted to influence her choice. Mr. Travers had not so much as mentioned the two letters. She was absolutely free, and must face her problem alone. It seemed to her that she had grown years older in the last few weeks. Was she never to reach the end of her indecision? Could nothing tear aside the veil of her heart, and reveal to her its true desire?

One morning she felt too tired and depressed to go out. She breakfasted in her room. The others, believing her to be merely fatigued by the incessant sight-seeing, did not change the arrangements for the day, which included a tallyho tour around the suburbs of the city, in company with a few friends of Jim and Linton. They all came to express their regrets, and to wish her a good rest, before they departed on their trip. She parted from them with smiles, but those smiles gave way to tears before the waiting tallyho with its four restless horses had received its passengers. Her heart was unaccountably heavy. A name-

A Fair Prize

less, vague foreboding lay upon it, like the shadow of an impending crisis.

As the hours slowly passed her restlessness increased. She could neither read, nor write, nor sleep, nor sit still. Up and down the room she paced. Many times in her sense of helplessness she knelt by her bedside in prayer; praying for



CORNER OF PARLOR IN FAB-RI-KO-NA BOOTH

peace, for strength, for grace to meet whatever might befall; praying for direction in her uncertainty, for a clear light upon the pathway of the future.

Slowly, heavily the hours dragged. She sent her luncheon back untasted. To the kindly enquiries of the maid she

A Fair Prize

gave evasive answers. She simply endured the time; waiting, waiting, with the shadow falling ever more deeply upon her.

About five o'clock she heard heavy footsteps coming hurriedly through the corridor. Almost before a tap could be given on her door, she had it open, and met her father face to face. Her brain reeled as she saw how terribly bruised his dear face was, and she would have fallen but for his quick support. He led her to a couch, and then, wrapping the mighty strength of his love about her, he told her the sad tidings he bore.

The day had been perfect. Beyond the heated streets of the city a cool breeze had stirred the foliage of the trees, and the summer flowers had filled the moving air with their perfume. The tallyho party had been in the gayest spirits. They had lunched at a quaint old tavern in a little settlement some miles out of town. Returning in the afternoon by a more circuitous route, they had rolled smoothly along, their keen enjoyment marred by no premonition of the catastrophe toward which the swiftly-moving horses were bearing them.

The animals had been very restless all day, but the driver had kept them under safe control. Coming in mid-afternoon to a railroad, they had hurried across in ample time to escape an approaching train, but the shrill blasts of the whistle, and the roar of the flying cars, had startled the horses, and set them to plunging furiously.

The driver exerted himself to the utmost to check them. In straining upon the reins he had risen to his feet, when the wheel of the swaying coach, now far on one side of the highway, suddenly hit an obstruction, and he was thrown headlong to the ground, carrying the reins with him. The crash of his fall, the strange jerk of the reins, and the screams of the frightened women, helped by the frantic shouts of the dragging driver, gave new impetus to the maddened brutes, and they sprang forward with fierce energy, swinging the coach to the opposite side of the road, where the ditching was dangerously deep. The coach toppled as the front wheels dropped into the ditch. Lionel and Bob, seated with

A Fair Prize

the rest of their party on the roof, leaped to the ground, hoping to seize the horses and prevent an accident. Just as they jumped, the coach went over. Bob was caught beneath it. Lionel reached the plunging leaders, and fought them into quick submission. But the sad work had been done—done beyond repair.

As the coach careened, Jack Linton, who sat directly behind Mrs. Dalsimer on the side nearest the ditch, seized her in his arms, and tried to so place himself beside her as to break her fall. They had both risen to their feet, and they fell together. They struck the earth just in front of the heavy rear wheel, and just as that wheel turned over with the turning of the coach. The massive hub caught Linton in his side, and dragged him completely across Mrs. Dalsimer, crushing him, but leaving her almost without injury.

As the dazed and bruised passengers scrambled to their feet, Travers and some other of the men ran to assist Lionel and the badly battered driver who were trying to hold the horses. Jim thought first of Madge, and in a moment was at her side.

“Are you hurt, my darling?” was his anxious query as he drew her to him.

“No, no!” she answered breathlessly. “But see, Jim! Look at Mr. Linton. He lies there without moving.”

Jim needed no second bidding. In an instant he had reached Linton, who was lying face down, one arm over the back of his head, as if to ward off a blow. Jim turned him gently. Even the least experienced would have known that the cheerful light had forever faded from those eyes.

Mrs. Dalsimer was bending close, and saw.

“Jim, Jim,” she whispered hoarsely, “he is dead! dead, Jim! And, O God forgive me! he died to save *me*! He died to save *me*!”

Others had gathered round. Still others were kneeling by another quiet form. Mrs. Dalsimer heard someone say: “Is he dead?”

“Who is it?” she asked of those near her.

No one answered. Just then Lionel came running up. He attempted to speak to her, but she begged him to first see who it was that was injured. He ran to the other group,

A Fair Prize

took one look, consulted hastily with a man who was examining the injured one, and leaped back at a bound.

“It’s Bob, Mrs. Dalsimer—not dead—bad—I’m going for a doctor!” And he was off.

Mrs. Dalsimer looked down at the motionless, distorted body of Linton. Then she stepped quickly to where Bob lay. The others made way for her. Sitting upon the ground she rested the fair, boyish head upon her lap, and wiped the dirt from his ghastly face. He was unconscious, but an occasional moan told of the agony which was racking his body. She bent over the soiled and bloody curls.

“Bob, dear Bob! If I can, I’ll save *you*. He died to save *me*, Bob,—and I thought I hated him. Only come back to us, child of his heart, and I’ll hold you so close to my own heart that you’ll love me, as he once did. My poor, dear boy—my poor, dear boy!”

When the physician came he found that unless there were serious internal injuries Bob’s worst hurts were a broken arm and some crushed ribs. It would be dangerous to move him far. He offered a temporary refuge in his own home, but informed Mrs. Dalsimer that some people had just vacated a furnished cottage close at hand, which they had rented for the summer but had been compelled to leave owing to serious illness in their distant home. Excepting for servants, it was ready for occupancy. The owner was a storekeeper in the village. Lionel was at once dispatched to rent it, and Travers went with the doctor to secure a litter upon which Bob could be carried. All were back in a few minutes. When she had given up her burden to the litter, Mrs. Dalsimer turned to Jim:

“You go, now, and bring Ray to me. Then you must leave by to-night’s train to prepare poor Elsie. Mr. Travers and Lionel can do what is needful here, and they and Ray can come East with the body. I will not leave Bob. He died to save *me*, Jim—he died to save *me*!” She threw her arms around her husband’s neck, and wept bitterly, but only for a moment; steadying herself by a strong effort, she said:

“Go, now, dear.” And she kissed him with a tenderness that thrilled him like a draught of strong wine.

While the women of the party went with Mrs. Dalsimer to

A Fair Prize

the cottage, the men, under instructions from the doctor, made the necessary arrangements for the removal of Linton's body. In an hour it, too, was in the cottage, in the care of an undertaker.

Long before Ray reached the cottage, Bob had regained consciousness, and his injuries were carefully dressed. Jim had engaged an expressman to bring out the baggage of the entire group, post-haste, and it arrived early in the evening. It was not until Mrs. Dalsimer and the doctor had cut away the soiled and stained garments, and had, as best they could, made the sufferer presentable, that Ray was permitted to see him. Meanwhile Jim had started for Saratoga, wiring a dispatch which would somewhat prepare Elsie for the dreadful tidings. The doctor's influence had secured for Mrs. Dalsimer the temporary assistance of two village women, and a trained nurse was momentarily expected. The rest of the unfortunate tallyho party had gone back to the city.

When Ray entered his room Bob was trying to smile in the midst of his pain, to reassure Mrs. Dalsimer, who was hovering over him with a tenderness he had never before seen in her. As Ray approached his bed, his eyes lighted with pleasure, and he essayed to reach out his free hand. The slight movement caused him a throe of pain that forced him to groan. Ray knelt beside the bed, and, strangely quiet, without a tear or a tremor, laid her hand on his fevered forehead.

"Bob, dear Bob," she murmured, "you must get well,—for me, Bob,—for me."

She bent over him, kissed him gently on his lips, rose and left the room.

Bob lay like one dazed. Even his pain was forgotten. Mrs. Dalsimer came to him and she, too, kissed him.

"Did she mean it, do you think?"

"Yes, Bob dear, I think she meant it."

"Is it only pity for me? Tell me,—do you think she loves me?"

"Yes, dear, she loves you. You have had her heart a long, long time. I have stood in your way, poor boy, but you must forgive me. You are my son, now, and I will be a loving mother to you."

"Thank God! Thank God! I can bear anything,—anything!"

A Fair Prize

Thereupon Mrs. Dalsimer, with such calmness as she could command, and with infinite sympathy, broke to him the fate of his father. It was a hard blow, but in the great joy that had come to him he bore it with a strength that prevented any serious influence on his condition.

When Ray left him she passed out of a side door of the sitting-room to an end of the piazza which half encircled the cottage. Here she found Lionel, alone; Travers being in the back parlor with the undertaker. Lionel was smoking, and living over again the sad events of the past few hours.

"How is Bob?" Lionel asked at once, knowing she had gone in to see him.

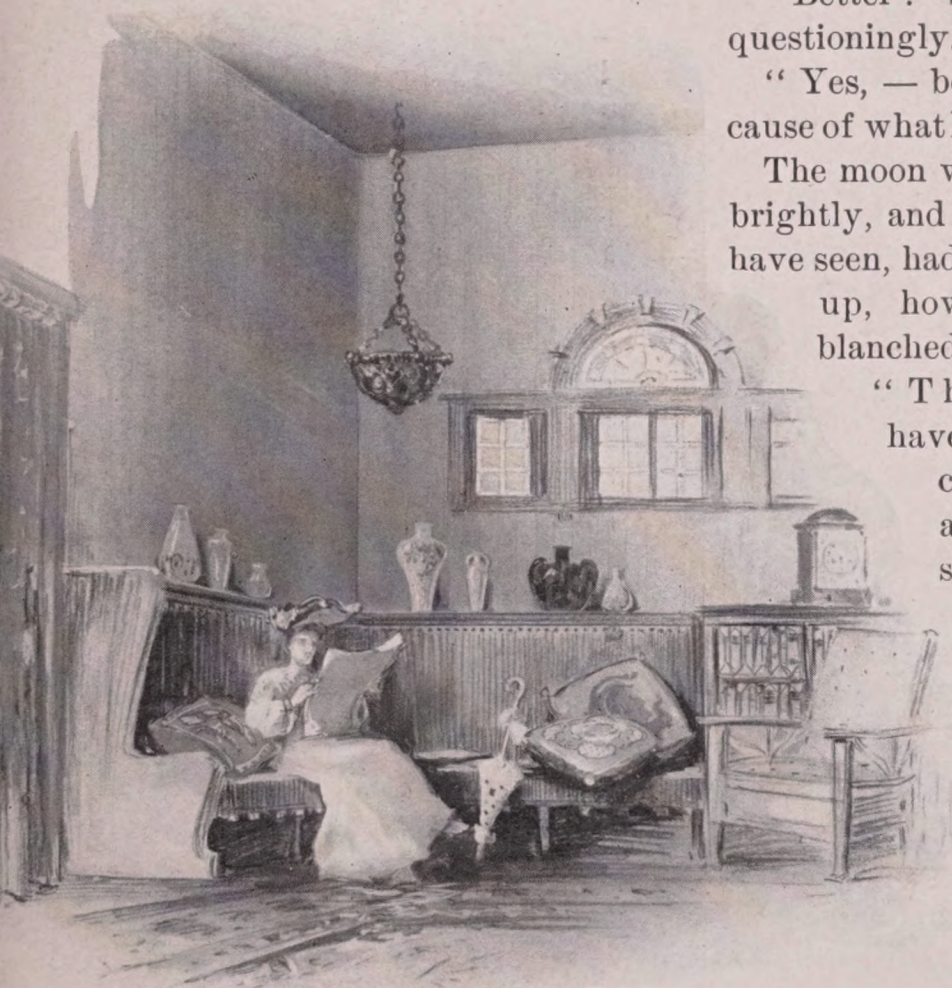
"Better, I think." She spoke faintly, and with an effort. The strain was telling heavily.

"Better?" said Lionel, questioningly.

"Yes, — better, — because of what I told him."

The moon was shining brightly, and Ray might have seen, had she looked up, how his face blanched.

"Then you have made your choice?" he asked unsteadily.



COSY CORNER IN LIBRARY, FAB-RI-KO-NA BOOTH

A Fair Prize

“Yes; my heart made it long ago, but I didn’t know — for certain — until to-day. Can you forgive me, Lionel? — can you forgive me, and still be my friend?”

Her strength was gone. She sank into a chair, and her sobs were piteous. Lionel stood beside her, and laid his hand on her bowed head. His own tears were falling.

“Ray, dear, believe me, I have nothing to forgive. My hope has been feeble at the best. What you have been to me, you will always be. To have you for my dear friend will be my highest honor. To see you happy will be my supreme joy. When my duty to you and to the dead is done, I will go my way, and do my work. I have gained a strength from your own strong soul, and it will help me to bear my burden without bitterness. Believe me, dear, and be comforted. I will leave you now, but I will be near. You will be better alone for the time.”

She looked up at him with grateful eyes. He pushed back the hair from her brow, and sealed with a reverent kiss upon its snow whiteness his vow of unchanging loyalty.

This story is of the present. Bob, with his new-found joy, is still but convalescent. What would a glimpse into the future show us? Could we follow the story, whither would it carry us? Let us prophesy:

It would carry us through the sad journey east with Linton’s remains; through Ray’s efforts to soothe Elsie’s bereaved heart; through the return of Jim and Ray and Elsie to the cottage (Travers and Lionel remaining in New York, the latter soon going back to his Indianapolis home); through the weeks of Bob’s recovery; through the wedding (which would be pleasant); through the settling down of the young people with Jim and Mrs. Dalsimer in a larger home (which was also decorated with Fab-Ri-Ko-Na); through the coming of the little ones (to whom Mr. Travers was an extra and most successful grandfather); through Elsie’s marriage three years after Ray’s, — and goodness only knows where we’d find a stopping place better than this.

It only remains to prophesy that Lionel was a frequent and welcome visitor at the Dalsimer-Linton home, and that when he married — as we will assume he did rather late in life — his wife learned to love Ray almost as much as he.

And so, as we part, gentle reader, here’s a health to the man who won, and another health to the man who lost A FAIR PRIZE!

POSTSCRIPT.

In telling the story of "A Fair Prize," we have had, as the gentle reader may suspect, a purpose other than the telling of a pleasant tale. We have aimed to interest the reader in the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Woven Wall Coverings, of which we are the manufacturers. In this postscript we wish to give you a little very-much-condensed information.

This great Louisiana Purchase Exposition will be known in the history of the decorative arts as the real beginning of the Burlap Period. Thousands who have never even heard of burlap as a decorative material will become familiar with it by seeing it so widely used in the Exposition buildings. They will, of course, distinguish between the coarse, hastily prepared fire-proof burlaps used so largely in the buildings, and the fine, high-grade Fab-Ri-Ko-Na wall coverings. The Exposition buildings are to stand but a little while.

If you wish to see the good burlap as it looks when used in home decoration, visit the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Booth, corner of Fourth and E streets, Palace of Varied Industries.

The Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Woven Wall Coverings are the latest, most artistic, and most satisfactory coverings for walls; the richest, most dignified, and most durable. They have certain practical qualities which commend them:

1. They keep the walls from cracking.
2. They are perfectly sanitary.
3. They are not easily marred by contact with furniture, or by accidental bumps or scratches.
4. They make the most effective background for pictures, statuary, furniture, draperies, bookcases, and all the furnishings of an artistic home.
5. They may be pasted to the wall with ordinary flour paste, and can be hung by any intelligent paperhanger.
6. They are dyed with the most permanent colorings known, and are very fast to light.
7. They can be restrained with Ko-Na-Colors at small cost when dimmed by dust and wear.
8. They cost no more than high-grade wall papers, and are really cheaper when their durability and other advantages are considered.

Our success has invited imitation of our goods, but the testimony of the trade is that Fab-Ri-Ko-Na woven wall coverings surpass all others in quality of material, beauty of texture, richness of color, permanence of dye, excellence of backing, and evenness of shade.

These wall coverings you will find at your decorator's. We will send a sample of any one color, that you may see the quality of finish and backing. The decorator can show

you the full line. If your decorator does not handle Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, send us his name, and we will see that he can supply you. If you have no decorator near by, write to us, and we will put you in touch with one, or, if that is impossible, we will quote you prices direct, and you can get a paperhanger to do the work. Be sure to ask for Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, and take no substitute.

We also furnish superior dyed or plain burlaps, out of which are made beautiful portiere curtains; unique draperies for walls, window seats, and cosy corners; effective hangings before bookshelves or open closets; covers for boxes, linen chests, and many kinds of ornamental device. For these purposes they are made without the stiff backing, and are soft enough to fall into graceful folds. These are made in two widths: thirty-six inches at 30 cents per yard; fifty-four inches at 50 cents per yard, delivered.

Have you seen the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Art Pillow Covers? New and original embroidery designs, stamped on burlaps, size 22 x 22 inches, to be worked with raffia. Price, delivered, including both front and back, 50 cents. Raffia, sufficient to embroider any one design, 20 cents extra. A large color-plate, showing the design in detail, the stitches and the colors of raffia in which they are made, is sent with each embroidery cover, making the work very easy.

Artistic Poster Designs, stenciled in colors on Burlaps, size 22 x 22 inches. All ready for making up. Price, delivered, including both front and back, 75 cents.

Lustrous Dyed Manilla Rope, four yards, enough to go round a pillow with bows at corners, Size A ($\frac{3}{8}$ inches), 35 cents; Size B ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch), 45 cents, delivered.

Send a postal request for illustrated catalogue giving cuts of all designs, and color-plates of Burlaps for the covers and the draperies, and of the raffia and rope.

Our Ko-Na-Colors are a special line of water colors, prepared by a new method. Strong, permanent, transparent colors. For all kinds of water color painting. Peculiarly adapted for painting on woven fabrics, and for painting on wood, or for wood staining. Make a sharp clean line. Do not run out with the threads or with the grain of the wood. Used effectively in connection with pyrography. Half ounce tubes, 10 cents. Ounce tubes, 18 cents. One pound cans, 65 cents.

We sell these drapery burlaps, pillow covers, and Ko-Na-Colors directly to the individual customer.

Address all orders or inquiries to H. B. Wiggin's Sons Co., Arch Street, Bloomfield, N. J.

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